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## NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Elliot Krieger, Communications – (401) 222-8471  
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### **Education Department Seeks Flexibility on No Child Left Behind RIDE proposes new system for school classification, support, intervention**

The R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) has proposed a new system for classification of schools and for providing support to those schools that miss their annual targets.

Under the new accountability system, RIDE will:

- focus on achievement gaps;
- diagnose school performance by identifying specific shortcomings and achievements at each school;
- enable RIDE to provide each school with the specific support or intervention needed to improve student achievement; and
- provide these schools with the ability to select interventions that respond to their context and their needs.

“The system of accountability, support, and intervention that we have developed enables us to focus on the specific problems unique to each school in Rhode Island and to provide our schools with the support they need to overcome challenges and improve student achievement,” said Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “We hope to put this new system in place during the current year so that we can move forward rapidly with our work of accelerating all schools toward greatness.”

RIDE proposed the new accountability system in a request submitted today (February 28) to the U.S. Department of Education seeking flexibility regarding provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. The Department is expected to review the request over the course of the next month. The Department may seek changes to the proposal before deciding whether to approve the request.

The No Child Left Behind Act, which became federal law ten years ago, establishes the accountability system that RIDE currently uses to classify schools and to intervene in schools that miss their annual targets. The current accountability system sets the same annual target for each school, regardless of its current level of achievement, and proscribes the same set of initiatives for all schools that miss annual targets.

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Under the new system, RIDE will classify schools based on:

- **Proficiency:** How many students have attained proficiency or better?
- **Distinction:** How many students have attained distinction?
- **Gap-closing:** Is the school serving all students, including those with disabilities and English Learners?
- **Progress:** Is the school approaching its 2017 targets?
- **Growth (K-8):** Are all students making progress?
- **Improvement (high schools):** Is the school improving annually?
- **Graduation (high schools):** Are all students ready for success?

After classifying schools using these measures, RIDE will identify schools in need of support and intervention and will diagnose the needs of each identified school. Each school that RIDE identifies will develop a multi-year intervention plan, which RIDE will monitor. The plans will include numerous reform strategies – in the areas of leadership, support, infrastructure, and content – that will be targeted to address the specific needs of each identified school.

RIDE will also use the classification system to commend schools that have attained high achievement levels or that are making dramatic progress.

Last year, the U.S. Department of Education offered states the opportunity offered states the opportunity to apply for flexibility regarding some provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. To date, 11 states have requested and received flexibility. Commissioner Gist decided that RIDE would seek flexibility during a second round of requests, whose deadline was today.

For more information on the RIDE flexibility request, including a complete version of the request RIDE submitted today, see:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/eseaflex.aspx>

For information from the U.S. Department of Education on flexibility requests, see:

<http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility>

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